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ABSTRACT

Suggesting that U.S. society is an adversarial one that makes sure that certain groups of people fail, this paper explores the ascription of failure in the adversarial contexts of the family, the school, and the workplace. The paper argues that if Americans continue to ascribe pariah status to large segments of the society, then the United States will inevitably and perhaps irretrievably fall into decline, that one segment of American society cannot survive without the other, and that the central conundrum that needs to be considered is how to balance economic growth with social justice. The first part of the paper discusses adversarial conditions in the contexts of the family, schools, and the workplace. The second part of the paper discusses how to balance economic growth with social justice, including balancing equity with excellence in American schools and balancing economic development with the social support of families. A postscript stresses that in America the possibility exists for new ways of thinking to emerge and for the wisdom of humanity to overcome the indignities and humiliations of the past. Thirty-five notes are included. Contains 43 references. (RS)

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# NCTE Concept Papers

Concept Paper No. 11

## Living in an Adversarial Society

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**NCTE**
**Concept Paper Series**

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## Living in an Adversarial Society

### No One Can Solve a Problem They Refuse to See

I like to read the *International Herald Tribune*. I get it a day late, but it does not matter, it is still a good read. I like to think that the articles I read provide me with more of an international perspective than I can get from reading either the *Boston Globe* or *New York Times*, both of which are sold locally. But gaining this "international perspective" can hit too close to home. On June 25, 1992, the front-page headline read "A Lecture to U.S. on Equality." In an interview with the editors and executives of the *tional Herald Tribune,* Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's "elder statesman," expressed his "concern at the decline of U.S. economic strength" and said that "American education and work practices should be changed" (Richardson, 1992).

The article states that Lee Kuan Yew is critical of U.S. educational authorities for refusing "to accept differences in learning aptitude between blacks, whites, and other races in America." Michael Richardson, who wrote the article on behalf of the executives and editors of the *International Herald Tribune*, also notes that "officials in Japan and other high-growth economies in East Asia hold similar views, but few are prepared to speak out on the sensitive issue of race."

Many Americans are similarly concerned about the "sensitivity" of the issue and would verbalize their outrage at Lee Kuan Yew's opinion. But there is a noticeable gap between American *talk* and American *behavior*. In the United States of America, we daily ascribe pariah status to many different peoples, people of color and white people, whose lives do not appear to "measure up" to the expectations of the United States' dominant institutions.[1] Lee Kuan Yew was wrong when he said that Americans refuse to accept differences in learning aptitude. We do not "accept" the differences; we create them. Ours is an adversarial society in which we make sure that certain groups of people fail. This is the problem we refuse to see.

In the following pages, I will explore the ascription of failure in the adversarial contexts of the family, the school, and the workplace. I will argue that if we continue to ascribe pariah status to such large segments of U.S. society, then this country will inevitably and perhaps irretrievably fall into decline, that one segment of American

society cannot survive without the other, and that the central conundrum that needs to be considered is how to balance economic growth with social justice.

*The Adversarial Conditions in Which Many American Families Live*

Families are suffering in the United States.[2] In the early 1980s I worked in Newark, New Jersey, with Catherine Dorsey-Gaines; we spent time with African American families living in poverty. We visited Ieshea, who was raising five children on her own. Once when we arrived, we found that Ieshea had not eaten for two weeks; what money she had she used to feed her children.

We visited Jerry, and on one occasion listened as he talked about his life:

> "I want my daughter in a good school. I want my kids in a good school. . . . But at the same time the jobs that I get and everything I do." Jerry's eyes filled with tears. "I'm being exploited. I'm really being exploited. Anytime I gotta get up at five o'clock in the morning. Wash up. Make me some coffee and everything and get up there and open up that place up at seven-thirty in the morning. Catch two buses. . . . Now I'm a little better off because I have my bus card. I catch my bus here and go and get my other bus and this and that. But I'm still paying. And I'm saying, 'Damn, I did a job over there.'" He pointed towards the trailers parked on the vacant lot on which he had painted the logo and the name of the construction company. And he explained that his boss at the silk-screen factory would not let him take the time off to pick up the check for the work he had done in his spare time. "I got fired. I got fired Monday. My boss wouldn't let me come and pick it up. Didn't want me to come and pick it up. I needed two hours. Because he's uptight. And he's a thirty-one-year-old junkie. . . . I said, 'Well, I'm goin' anyway, man. I'm goin'--I'm goin' to get mine. I know what the thing is here.' I said, 'You can't give me consideration for runnin' this place?' He comes in eleven, twelve o'clock, often drunk and high and everythin', and I'm runnin' that place, man, for the last six or seven months. . . . I got pictures. I got portraits. Man, I got all that shit. I got to do all this for

> people. I don't feel like it when I come home. After smellin' all that stuff, I eat and I go to sleep--for a few hours. Then I'm up for a few hours. Then I'm up watching the two-thirty, three o'clock movie. Groucho Marx and the rest of them. I go get her a paper and I'm gone again. Like a zombie. . . . " He talked of working hard and earning money. "Then," he said, "I got lost somewhere along the way and I don't have it. I keep us eatin' and a roof over our head. You know, I maintain that, you know. But I don't have what I should have. You know. And sometimes I question whether I should stay here. I do. You're asking me how I really feel. You want to know how I really feel . . . I'm a bona fide artist." He spoke quietly. "I'm a money maker. Or I'm a producer. I can produce. . . . You understand? . . . Ain't nobody helpin' me, and I'm losin'." (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, pp. 38-39)

Jerry died a short while after this conversation. Officially he died of pneumonia. Unofficially he died of poverty. His lungs were damaged by the fumes of the silk screen factory. Coughing blood, he died of exhaustion.

Ieshea's two eldest sons, her bright and beautiful children, were jailed. Their lives will be half over by the time they are released from prison.[3] Ieshea lost hope. She used drugs to cope with her pain and several years later she, too, was jailed.

What became increasingly evident during the Newark study was that the social agencies that were supposed to support the families with whom we were working often made their situations worse. Sometimes agency caseworkers were caring and encouraging, but of little help; other times they were openly hostile, asking questions that appeared to be designed to challenge the authenticity of the problems that living in poverty had caused. The lives of the families with whom we worked were managed, controlled, and even destroyed by the adversarial conditions people encountered when they stepped into the social "welfare" system.

In recent years I have been working in Laconia, New Hampshire, in a predominantly white community with people who are trying to cope with multiple difficulties. Among them is a young woman who was pregnant and homeless when I first met her. She is suffering from addiction to alcohol and cocaine, and she is recovering from sexual abuse. Another woman is recovering from sexual abuse, heroin addiction,

and institutionalization. And a man with whom I am working is suffering from alcoholism and drug abuse, while at the same time trying to cope with chronic family illness, substandard housing, and unemployment. All of the men and women with whom I am working have children.

By juxtaposing the personal stories of these men and women with the bureaucratic interpretations of their lives, it is possible to see the inequities of "the system." When I first met Sam, he had been homeless for six years. He was suffering from alcoholism and chronic seizures. With encouragement from me and from the community researchers who worked for the project,[4] Sam tried to get assistance from the New Hampshire Division of Human Services. After several unsuccessful attempts on his own, we accompanied Sam to the agency's office. Sam was given several multipage forms to fill in, and he was told that if he left any questions blank his application would be discarded. Most questions simply did not apply to Sam's situation. For example, there were questions about household expenses--how much did he spend on heating fuel, electricity, cooking fuel? But the question that stumped Sam was one that required him to write the street addresses of the places he had lived in the last year. Sam wanted to write "homeless," but a caseworker told him that his application for assistance would not be processed without a street address. Sam gave the address of a friend who had let him sleep under his porch earlier in the winter. The caseworker said, "What about before that?" Sam gave her the address of a house where he had slept in the garage.

The street address was fabricated, encoded in ways that made sense to the state agency, but in ways that made no sense to Sam, who said afterwards that he thought making up addresses was "unnecessary." He said:

> It's simple and sweet. If I am homeless what else can I say? I've lived in the city all my life. OK. But I'm on the streets and I do not have a legal residence. . . . So in other words she was lying. I did not stay at those places . . . I mean I'm sleeping under a porch. So what? That isn't a street address. And I shouldn't have been there because if his mother had known she'd have thrown me out for sure.[5]

Similar accounts can be given for each participant in the Laconia Literacy Project. Although the stories are different, the common thread is that their personal lives contrast dramatically with the "official" versions. All that counts are the

abstracted (or subtracted) renditions, constructed through series of questions that assume a way of life that has very little to do with the ways people really live. When Sam went to the hospital because he wanted help to stop drinking, he was jailed. When Kathryn was pregnant and wanted a place to live, she was told that she could not receive help with the rent until one month before the baby was born. When her baby arrived, she was sent home from the hospital with a two-day supply of formula (she did not want to breastfeed her baby because of her recent cocaine use), and it was three weeks before she received help from WIC.

When Laurie was diagnosed with cervical cancer, she was treated with external beam irradiation and intracavity Cesium insertion. A radiation implant was inserted into her uterus and left there for three days. The nurses who entered her room stood behind a lead shield. Laurie said she kept asking herself, "What is this doing to the rest of my body?" Since Laurie's irradiation, she has gone through menopause and has suffered from both bladder and rectal bleeding. She is twenty-seven-years old. She finds it difficult to walk, and she rarely leaves her home. When I visit I often find her sitting in a chair with her legs drawn up to her chest and her arms across her stomach to ease the pain. In a recent report on Laurie, a physician states, "Patient has history of cervical cancer with radiation treatment. Cytology favors cellular changes due to radiation." Another report suggests that "bleeding and bladder changes" could be caused by "the combination of external beam and especially intracavity radiation." When I asked Laurie why she was not given a hysterectomy she said, "Money." She is convinced that since Medicaid pays only a fraction of the cost of private surgery, her financial status was a factor in the decision-making process.

In Laconia, as in Newark, families are terminally poor. The social agencies that have been established supposedly to help families just monitor their existence. "Entitlements" is a misnomer; at the national, state, and local level, every effort is made to disqualify the poor from obtaining benefits from the social welfare system. A paper logjam has been created by an out-of-control bureaucratic machine. Mountains of forms have been designed to keep out those who might cheat the system. A food-stamp poster at the state welfare office in Laconia makes it clear:

> Cheating can now be a felony in New Hampshire. Up to 15 years and $2,000 are the penalty for people guilty of cheating in this program.[6]

On the same poster, food-stamp recipients are told that the information they provide will be compared with the records of the Department of Employment Security, the Veterans Administration, and the Social Security Administration.

Every three months, Laurie must go to state welfare officials to verify her eligibility for benefits. She takes her rent receipts and heating bills, and an envelope filled with other documents that might be needed. At her last meeting, the caseworker was friendly and joked as he reminded her of the "lump sum" policy--if Laurie won money on a scratch lottery ticket, she was told she must report it. Several forms were made up of identical lists of questions. The caseworker said, "Some of these questions I might have asked you. But ours is not to reason why." As he stumbled over a question that he had asked before, he said, "It gets old after a while. Your eyes go buggy." Laurie was asked if she had a bank account. She gave the caseworker a bank book. Several years ago there was $3 in the account; she said she did not know if it was still there. Laurie was asked if she had a burial plot or an agreement with a funeral home. If she did, these would have to be declared. The meeting lasted an hour. In that time Laurie signed six sets of forms, four of them declarations that she was telling the truth. The caseworker made it clear that Laurie's signature on one of the forms gave them the right to investigate her, to check with the IRS and with banks and other agencies. She was told that a representative of the agency might also investigate her home. Laurie said that an investigator had already come to her house on three separate occasions.[7] "I don't know what they thought they'd find," she said.

*The Adversarial Conditions in American Schools*

In the education of U.S. children, equity is not a factor. In one telephone call to a state department of education to find out the range of per-pupil costs for education, a finance officer stated, "We don't have that information. We don't have to know. We don't need it. I don't know that it would make any difference to know which school district spent $2,000 and which school district spent $9,000. What would we do with that information?"[8] In New Hampshire, the range for per-pupil instructional services is $2,899 to $9,554.[9] In California, the range is $2,692 to $19,912.[10] And in Texas, the range is from $2,150 to $26,139.[11]

In *Savage Inequalities*, Jonathan Kozol (1991) quotes John Coons, a professor of law at Berkeley, who speaks of the "calculated unfairness" in the funding of education in the United States:

> When low-income districts go to court to challenge the existing system of school funding, writes John Coons, the natural fear of the conservative is "that the levelers are at work here sapping the foundations of free enterprise."
>
> In reality, he says, there is "no graver threat to the capitalist system . . . To defend the present public school finance system on a platform of economic or political freedom is no less absurd than to describe it as egalitarian. In the name of all the values of free enterprise, the existing system [is] a scandal.
>
> There is something incongruous, he goes on, about "a differential of any magnitude" between the education of two children . . . The reliance of our public schools on property taxes and the localization of the uses of those taxes "have combined to make the public school into an educator for the educated rich and a keeper for the uneducated poor. There exists no more powerful force for rigidity of social class and the frustration of natural potential. (pp. 206-207)

The United States educates the children of parents who can afford to pay. Children whose parents are poor are locked out of the system.[12] It is difficult to be concerned about the lack of computers in classrooms where there are so many children that some do not have seats. Kozol (1991) expresses it well when he writes: "Behind the good statistics of the richest districts lies the triumph of a few. Behind the saddening statistics of the poorest cities lies the misery of many" (p. 158).[13]

Even though the American public school system discriminates against children who are poor, their educational progress is still compared with the educational progress of their more affluent peers. Children living in economically depressed inner-city neighborhoods and in rural poverty do not usually do as well on standardized tests as children who live in property-rich urban and suburban neighborhoods.[14] The response of the federal government to these low test scores is to mandate more tests.

Many states have joined the federal government in advocating more tests to

improve the educational performance of students in public schools. In July 1991, the New Hampshire State Board of Education sent a memo to the Commissioner of Education, proposing that the reading skills of all third-grade children be tested. It is difficult to ignore the coercive language in the Board of Education's statement:

> Using in-house knowledge, The Governor's Task Force Report, and the National Goals as anchors, the Department will be asked to issue a set of *rigorous* objectives. These objectives should identify *concrete areas of knowledge* and detailed description of skills that *must be* mastered by the completion of the primary grades, thereby insuring future academic success. (New Hampshire State Board of Education, 1991, p. 2)

The trickle-down effect of federal and state test mandates has an impact at the local level when school districts add their own tests to the already-required battery.[15] In some school districts, the content of these tests becomes the focus of instruction, with teachers drilling students in low-level skills so that when results are published in the local papers, their tests scores will match those of other schools. In other schools, the skill-and-drill regime becomes even more rigorous as teachers try to increase students' scores to ensure teachers' merit pay.[16]

When children fail to reach the required levels on standardized tests, their abilities are questioned. To find out what is wrong with them, further tests are administered. Socially constructed difficulties then become an in-the-head problem. Much of my time is spent working with both children and adults who have been sorted in this way and ascribed pariah status by the system. In his foreword to my 1991 book *Learning Denied*, in which I chronicled the school life of Patrick, a much-tested child, William Wansart writes:

> This story is an example of the reductionistic nature of an assessment process that reduces learning to the scores on standardized tests. It is an example of the popularly held belief that test scores on standardized tests are neutral and objective representations of a student's true abilities, needing no interpretation or regard for the context within which they were derived. While we know this is not true, in practice the glorifica-

> tion of standardized data over observation prevails. This belief is further coupled with the assumption that the cause of school failure lies within the student. (Wansart, 1991, p. xii)

How can we compare the test results of students in Jersey City with those of their contemporaries in Princeton, New Jersey, when we know that in Jersey City, high school computer classes take place in a storage closet, and in Princeton, classes take place in comfortable computer areas equipped with some 200 IBM computers and a hookup to Dow Jones to study stock transactions (Kozol, 1991, p. 158)? How can we compare the test scores of high school students who have no microscopes in their science lab, and whose class enrollment is too high for lab work, with the students who study science in small classes in well-equipped laboratories? How can we? It is a question we refuse to ask and a problem we refuse to see. We continually make these comparisons at the national, state, and local level, and no official of the establishment cries foul--as long as the students who fail are not the artificially advantaged offspring of the privileged elite.

Arguing that "we must continue to produce an uneducated social class," Gerald Bracey (1991), a research psychologist and policy analyst, states that U.S. schools are "performing better than ever." Bracey compares the test scores of American students without any reference to the social and academic contexts in which they have been educated. He writes:

> The *average score*, compiled from the scores of everyone who takes the test, has gone down because, since the 1960s, that average has included more scores of white students with lower grade-point averages and more scores of groups that have traditionally been excluded from higher education: blacks, Hispanics, and women. These groups have not traditionally scored well on the SAT, nor do they now. (p. 109)

At no point in the article does Bracey discuss the socioeconomic and academic contexts in which students who do not receive high scores on "standardized" tests live their everyday lives. He talks about his daughter reading Ibsen in high school and about the high school science displays of "complicated explorations of protein absorption, gene

splicing [and] immunological reactions" in the administration building of Cherry Creek School district,[17] where he used to be director of research and evaluation.

Context becomes relevant to Bracey only when the scores of U.S. students fall below their Japanese counterparts. Then, like the establishment that he represents, Bracey protests:

> American students may or may not stack up well against students from other countries, but, in the studies done to date, the students are not comparable, the curricula are not comparable, the schools are not comparable, and the tests are not comparable. Even in such "straightforward" subjects as science and math, test questions do not travel well.
>
> It should surprise no one that Japanese students, who attend school for some 243 days a year, who go to school on Saturdays, who attend "after-school" schools, and who have mothers at home pressuring them to do well, score higher than American youngsters. . . . [T]he simple-minded, context-free comparisons of narrow measures of achievement distort the situation. (Bracey, 1991, p. 113)

If we accept Bracey's contention that "simple-minded, context-free comparisons of narrow measures of achievement distort the situation" when we compare the educational achievements of American students with students of other nations, then we have to apply the same principle to comparisons made within the United States between students who live their lives in poverty and students who live in affluent communities in which there are an abundance of educational and social services. We cannot compare the progress that twelve-year-old Bobby makes in reading and writing in school with the progress of other students that age, when we know that in the first three years of his elementary schooling, Bobby attended eight schools in five different states. We cannot make comparisons when we know that during his third-grade year, he lived in the truck that his father drove and for six months did not attend school. We cannot make comparisons when we know that Bobby's living arrangements are as precarious today as they have ever been; when we know that for part of his fifth-grade year, his mother worked the late shift at a factory and Bobby had to be picked up from school by a babysitter early in the afternoon so that every day he missed some classes. We cannot make comparisons when we know that Bobby had to stay with the babysitter until mid-

night, when his mother finished her shift and picked him up to take him home.

We cannot make these comparisons, and yet we do. Bobby was administered a WISC--Revised, even though poverty is clearly a handicap for children taking IQ tests (see U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, 1979). Bobby was given the Woodcock-Johnson Cognitive Battery--Revised and the Woodcock-Johnson Standard Achievement Battery--Revised, even though it was unlikely that he had been schooled in all the decontextualized skills assessed by these outmoded tests. The deck was stacked, comparisons were made, and in-the-head problems were ascribed (see Taylor, 1993a). Bobby was labeled learning disabled.

In the U.S. educational system, structural problems become behavioral issues, and the fraud is perpetuated. Due to inequities in funding, students are sorted into rich and poor; under the pretense of sorting students according to their academic abilities and disabilities, students are sorted according to their economic status, the languages they speak,[18] and the color of their skin.[19] This is the problem we refuse to see.

*The Adversarial Conditions in the American Workplace*

In his often disturbing book *Head to Head*, Lester Thurow (1992) explores what he calls "the coming economic battle among Japan, Europe, and America." In his exploration of "the new economic game," Thurow states that "for all practical purposes, natural resources have dropped out of the competitive equation" (p. 41). He goes on to argue that "skilled people become the only sustainable competitive advantage" (p. 52).

This is not a new idea. The urgent need to improve the skills of American workers is a well-publicized goal of U.S. domestic policy. But again, this is talk and not behavior, for nothing much is happening to suggest that there is any real commitment behind the political rhetoric to re-skill America. And even if there were, it is unlikely that "new" training programs *alone* would make a difference, given the adversarial conditions of the American workplace.

Thurow offers this explanation of the way the United States treats its workers:

> If sustainable competitive advantage swirls around workforce skills, Anglo-Saxon firms have a problem. Human-resource management is not traditionally seen as central to the competitive survival of the firm in

> America or Great Britain. Skill acquisition is an individual responsibility, and business firms exist to beat wages down. Labor is simply another factor of production to be hired--rented at the lowest possible cost--much as one buys raw materials or equipment. Workers are not members of the team. *Adversarial labor-management relations are part of the system.* (p. 54, emphasis added)

Mishel and Bernstein (1992) found that between 1979 and 1991, the entry-level real hourly wage for high school graduates fell 26.5 percent for men and 15.5 percent for women. In the United States, workers are a commodity to be hired and fired for the lowest possible wages. Training is an individual responsibility. Money isn't wasted on the average Joe or Flo. Thurow (1992) states:

> While American firms often talk about the vast amounts spent on training their workforces, in fact, they invest less in the skills of their workers than do either Japanese or German firms. What they do invest is also more highly concentrated on professional and managerial employees. The more limited investments that are made in average workers are also much more narrowly focused on the specific skills necessary to do the next job rather than on the basic background skills that make it possible to absorb new technologies. (p. 54)

In the United States, training is the privilege of the elite. Both private and public universities in the United States are recognized as world-class educational institutions. The only problem is that most Americans cannot afford to attend them. Training programs at technical institutions are almost nonexistent, and on-the-job training for most workers offers only turn-key training,[20] not process-oriented technological skills. As high-paying manufacturing jobs have been relocated overseas, American workers who have little or no training are left competing for unskilled jobs that pay little more than minimum wage in low-paying industries.

The bottom line is that the majority of U.S. workers will be unable to participate in the key technological-process industries of the next few decades. Microelectronics, biotechnology, new-materials industries, telecommunications, robotics, and

computer technologies are among the industries for which we should be training workers. But unlike Germany, which provides apprenticeship preparation,[21] and Japan, which provides training through its system of schooling, the United States offers no national system of apprenticeships and offers only outdated instruction in its high school programs, many of which are not structured for students to actively participate in process-oriented problem-solving activities.

Without the financial ability to pay for a college education, many Americans, including disproportionate numbers of African Americans and Latinos, are locked out of the high-tech process industries, *not* because of "intellectual deficiencies" but because of the limited turn-key training programs available to them, and because of the adversarial hire-and-fire conditions in the U.S. workplace.

**A Central Conundrum: How to Balance Economic Growth with Social Justice**

Suspect irony on my part, but it could be stated that the American (I cannot say "democratic") system works. It is consistent at every level. In the workplace, access to high-tech training is made available to professional and managerial employees. In school, access to advanced educational opportunities is made available to the children of higher-paid professionals (in comparison with minimum- or no-wage workers) who can afford to live in property-rich communities. Then, to make sure there are no loopholes in the system, the families of the men and women who are locked out of the U.S. workplace, and whose children are undereducated in U.S. schools, are processed through a social welfare system that provides no more than subsistence "entitlements" to ensure their status as the terminally poor.[22]

In *Millennium*, Jacques Attali (1991), president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in London, writes of the "new racism,"[23] and of the "winners and losers" of the next millennium. He predicts that:

> The losers will outnumber the winners by an unimaginable factor. They will yearn for the chance to live decently, and they are likely to be denied that chance. They will encounter rampant prejudice and fear. They will find themselves penned in, asphyxiated by pollution, neglected

> through indifference. The horrors of the twentieth century will fade by comparison. (p. 84)

Attali states that "if the people of power in the emerging spheres of prosperity knew how to think in the long term, they would watch carefully the peripheries at their doors" (p. 84). I would argue that *right now*, the people of power should also pay attention to the terminally impoverished who live in the peripheries *inside* the doors. Even without Attali's prognostications, it is abundantly clear that those who have been ascribed pariah status in this country can endure no more.

The structural stress on the American social system is registering at seven on the Richter scale, and it is increasing exponentially, with few attempts being made to relieve the pressure. There have been pipe-bomb scares at the Laconia office of the New Hampshire Division of Health and Human Services, and in Los Angeles, where there are greater concentrations of disenfranchised people, there have been riots--although it would be more accurate to saythere has been an insurrection.[24]

With no relief in sight, men, women, and children, who all have been cast out of the dominant U.S. institutions, find ways to use their ingenuity to survive. For example, the illegal drug trade is a pariah industry. In *The Politics of Heroin*, Alfred McCoy (1991) argues that "heroin is a mass-market commodity with salesmen and distributors just like cigarettes, alcohol, or aspirin" (p. 389). The money and power that come from the distribution and sale of illegal drugs provide dealers with a way back into America's capitalist society.[25]

For others, protesting the ascription of pariah status has enabled them to use both their intellectual and creative abilities. In Laconia, each one of the men and women with whom I am working has found ways to counter the events that have taken place as they struggle to survive. They portray themselves in personal narratives, in prose and poems, in intricate collages, and in representational and abstract paintings. They tell it like it is. Uneducated and unemployed they might be, but they are bright, intelligent, and often wise.

The African American men, women, and children with whom Cathe Dorsey-Gaines and I worked in Newark, New Jersey, wrote poetry, painted pictures, and celebrated the histories of those who have struggled to overcome racism in American society. This kind of individual expression has been transformed by collective voices into protest songs. Sweet Honey in the Rock (1983) sings:

You cut social security and the food stamps too
raise the budget for defense constantly
Well, your hunger for war ain't nothing
new cowboy
I'm in battle all my life to be me . . .

You chain my body to dope, blow my mind
up in smoke
It's a wonder I can still sing my song
Alcoholism is doing a lot of your killing
if I forget to pray once I'll be gone.

New forms of music emerged early in the 1980s as young African American men and women expressed their views in rap, which was considered by many to be an "outlaw culture" (Nelson & Gonzales, 1991, p. xvii). In recent years rap has become a complex art form, but it is still centered around social protest and social commentary. There are expressions of outrage at police brutality:

Fuck tha police comin' straight from the underground
A young nigger got it bad because I'm brown

They have the authority to kill a minority
Fuck that shit cause I ain't the one
For a punk motherfucker with a badge and a gun. (NWA, 1989)

And there are expressions of concern for kids who have been abused by the system. KRS-One (Lawrence Parker), a member of Boogie Down Productions, explains his music as follows:

I speak to the human intelligence. I want to show kids another way to deal with things. We can deal with things by being intelligent and dealing with our problems head-on. (Adler, 1991, p. 61)

KRS-One and Boogie Down Productions rap:

> Knowledge reigns supreme
> The ignorant are ripped to smithereens
> What do you mean when you say I'm rebellious
> 'Cause I don't accept everything that you're tellin' us? (Adler, 1991, p. 61)

Much like Boogie Down Productions, Public Enemy (famous for its recording of "Fight the Power") attacks drug dealing, the government, television, news organizations, and the CIA. Adler (1991, p. 63) quotes Chuck D, the leader of Public Enemy: "It's about gold brains now, not gold chains."[26]

Paradoxically, while the young people whose lives are recorded in rap remain officially locked out of the system, high-tech industries are making millions from their plight.[27] New industries are booming on the profits made as they harness the messages of talented rap artists. The impact is undeniable. Manufacturing companies are making large profits from their message merchandise ("Are you sick? Racism is an illness"). The hip-hop dancers Rock Steady Crew have appeared at Alice Tully Hall (Holden, 1992), and city jam--which comes from hip-hop, rhythm and blues, and break dancing--has become a widely recognized form of aerobic exercise (Toledo, 1992).

But the central conundrum remains. How do U.S. firms balance economic growth with social justice? How does the American educational system provide equal opportunities for students to gain the skills that they will need to participate in the high-tech industries that will dominate the global economy? How does the social welfare system support families and provide opportunities for them to change the circumstances of their everyday lives by using their skills and abilities to participate in what we would like to believe can be a fully democratic society? In the rest of this paper, I will try to respond to each of these questions.

In *Head to Head*, Lester Thurow (1992) writes:

> In the end the skills of the bottom half of the population affect the wages of the top half. If the bottom half can't effectively staff the processes that have to be operated, the management and professional jobs that go with these processes disappear. (p. 55)

While Thurow's language is unfortunate, his message is clear. Hire-and-fire policies no longer make sense. If U.S. industry is to remain competitive--to survive--in the world economy, then it is going to take a team effort. Anglo-Saxon ("each-man-for-himself") ways of doing business have become as antiquated as the name implies. The vast amounts of money that are spent on professional development have to be redirected so that workers who traditionally have been excluded from the team can become fully participatory members.

This brings us back to the problem we refuse to see. In recent years, executives in American corporations have blamed their declining productivity on the inadequacies of an undereducated workforce; complaining about low literacy skills[28] has been a good way to cover up their own deficiencies. Two points need to made. The first is that the hierarchies of decontextualized skills that are transmitted in most U.S. high schools are not transferable to the American workplace. The late Sylvia Scribner's (1986) pioneering research on practical intelligence clearly shows that there are significant disjunctures between the problem-solving skills that workers require to function in the workplace and the decontextualized skills that they have learned in school. For example, on-the-job accuracy is not necessarily related to accuracy on school-like arithmetic tasks. This leads to the second point. In her research, Scribner found that so-called unskilled workers (a) departed from literal formats, and (b) used flexible, least-effort strategies. Scribner argues that what appear on the surface to be very simple instances of practical thinking and problem solving, emerge, when examined more closely, as highly complex, socially constructed dynamic systems for establishing problem-solution relationships. To reiterate these two major points: the importance of generalized,

decontextualized skills is overestimated, and the importance of practical thinking and problem solving is underestimated.

The U.S. workforce has been devalued by corporate America. Abdicating responsibility for the training of men and women for high-tech industries is an old economic game that has serious consequences. Businesses will fail and companies will fold. In a *Phi Delta Kappan* article, Jonathan Weisman (1992) writes:

> A decade ago, General Motors Corporation shut down its plant in Fremont, California, proclaiming the workforce the worst it had ever seen. . . . Toyota approached GM about a joint venture at the idle plant. Together, the auto companies rehired 80% of those supposedly miserable workers. . . . Today, NUMMI [New United Motors Manufacturing Company] is preparing for a major expansion and has climbed from the nadir of GM's productivity chart to the zenith. (p. 721)

Humanitarian reasons for social justice may fail, but corporate profits as a reason will not. American companies vastly underestimate the skills and abilities of their workers. If U.S. industries continue to treat people as commodities instead of as valuable members of the industrial team, then America will not be able to compete in the rapidly changing global economy. Earlier I quoted Thurow, who argues that skilled people have become the "only sustainable competitive advantage." In the new economic game, equity and excellence have become inextricably linked. The key to economic growth in the United States *is* social justice.

*Balancing Equity with Excellence in American Schools*

In *Millennium*, Jacques Attali (1991) predicts that "the world will change more in the next ten years than in any other period of history" (p. 120). He states:

> [A]ll countries that wish to succeed will need to welcome change, to make creation a fundamental ambition, invention a requirement, innova-

> tion a necessity. New ideas must be allowed to flourish and novelty must be rewarded. (p. 128)

It is difficult to imagine how new ideas can flourish in schools where students are handicapped by the system (Taylor, 1991, 1993). If the fate of each nation will depend upon the education of its citizens (Attali, 1991), then the United States can no longer afford to throw away half of its children. If America is interested in participating in the global economy of the twenty-first century, then the country must become fiscally responsible for the education of *every* child. As with industry, vast sums of money need to be redirected to overcome inequities in funding (see Taylor & Piche, 1990; Ferguson, 1991). In addition, more money needs to be spent on teachers and less on administrators,[29] and state and federal spending on testing has to be curtailed. For example, California spends approximately $600,000,000 on the triannual reevaluation of special education students. In every state, scientifically indefensible assessment practices--which discriminate against students who are poor, students of color, and students for whom English is a second language--continue to be used in what could legitimately be described as the biggest waste of money in the history of American education (see Taylor, 1993a).

Once again we are back to the problem we refuse to see. Even though there are chronic inequities in the system, students are blamed for "their" low achievement. Unfair political practices are socially reconstructed and pariah status is ascribed. Societal problems become in-the-head difficulties of the child; the assumption is made that something is wrong with the student. But remember Bracey (1991, p. 113)? "Simple-minded, context-free comparisons of narrow measures of achievement distort the situation." We cannot assume that because a student does not pass a test or do well on some decontextualized, school-based task that the student has low-level skills. In Newark, Cathe Dorsey-Gaines and I used to copy the graffiti written on the school walls. Signs of friendship, notes of bravado, and salutations filled the space. When we showed Tanya, one of the mothers with whom we were working, some of the graffiti, she said, "Just out of the blue, said it to his friends and they loved it. Probably the dummy in school. Have all his friends doin' his homework for him. Flunkin' all his tests" (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p. 182).

Educational researchers (many of whom are teachers), like Scribner, have found that students' literacy skills and problem-solving capabilities are far more complex than our present educational system indicates. As a nation, we underestimate the capabilities of our children, and we constantly devalue their considerable skills. The superficial measures that we regularly use blind us to their talents. We do not count the life skills that they have learned, nor do we value the life support systems that they have devised.

Again, the points made in the previous section on the workplace apply. We overestimate the importance of generalized decontextualized skills, and we underestimate the importance of practical thinking and problem solving. If students are to be prepared to live in a rapidly changing world, then their skills must be recognized. Excellence and equity must become inseparable.

When this happens and teachers become advocates for children (see Taylor, 1993a), one major change that takes place is that students' practical thinking and problem-solving capabilities become the foundation of their school-based learning. Studies of learning in the workplace have identified the skills used by effective workers; these skills are similar to those that children use when problem solving in holistic, constructivist classrooms (see Taylor, 1993b). When new problems are generated, students bring their everyday knowledge to the problem-solving situation. They depart from literal formats and use least-effort, flexible strategies; they simplify the task; they participate with others in rethinking the problem; they generate hypotheses and develop situated explanations. All of these are skills students will need when they enter the workforce of the twenty-first century. To survive economically, the United States needs to nurture the problem-solving capabilities of its children. Their creativity must be supported, and their inventions encouraged. Their new ideas must be allowed to flourish, and the novelty of their explanations must be rewarded. For many of us, equity is a humanitarian concern, but equity has also become an economic necessity.

*Balancing Economic Development with the Social Support of Families*

In the United States, men, women, and children are terminally impoverished by the system. In my research, I have worked with people who are abused by the social "wel-

fare" system, who have died (and are dying) through neglect, and who have been warehoused in federal prisons. In *When the Bough Breaks*, Sylvia Ann Hewlett reports (1991, p. 269) that "California is planning to spend $2 billion on additional cell space in ten new facilities, Texas $500 million, and New York State $700 million." Hewlett also writes:

> During the 1980s, the number of persons in federal and state prisons doubled. There are now 1 million people behind bars and another 2.6 million on probation or parole. . . . Nationwide, prison costs total $20 billion a year, much more than we spend on Aid to Families with Dependent Children. (p. 269)

No band-aid will fix this problem. America is disabling its workforce, and nothing less than a total restructuring of the social welfare system will bring about the reforms that are needed.

Jacques Attali writes (1991, p. 128) that in the hyperindustrial world, "new ways of doing things will become essential." He predicts that:

> Each nation will search in its own way and according to its own traditions for a new equilibrium between order and disorder, between plenitude and poverty, between dignity and humiliation. (p. 129)

America's search for a new equilibrium needs to begin with a critical examination of the ineffective use of resources allocated for the social welfare system. Less money needs to be spent on policing programs and jailing people, and more money needs to be spent on the delivery of social welfare services and educational support programs that will enable people to lose their ascribed pariah status and rejoin the U.S. workforce. If human talent and large-scale skill investment have become essential for the health and welfare of the American economy, then we would do well to think more seriously about the health and welfare of the American people.

We are back to the problem we refuse to see. As with the workplace and school, most of the social and educational programs available for families are deficit-

driven. People are blamed for living in poverty. Societal problems become in-the-head difficulties. The underlying assumption is that there is something wrong with people, and so if we reprogram[30] them, they will be able to get a job and support a family. Perhaps the most obvious example of such attempted reprogramming is the national family literacy movement. Elsa Auerbach (1990) writes:

> The family literacy trend is situated in the context of alarmist national concern with the "literacy crisis": drop-out statistics and declining academic achievement make headlines, with illiteracy being blamed for poverty, crime, drug abuse, homelessness, and the lack of international competitiveness. (p. 14)

Auerbach goes on:

> [I]n fact, real literacy levels are rising rather than falling and the crisis can be better explained as a kind of ideological smokescreen for underlying socioeconomic problems inherent in our system. In other words, social inequities, poverty, and the accompanying problems of crime, homelessness, and so on are the result of economic policies rather than family inadequacies; *illiteracy is a consequence of poverty rather than the cause of it*. (p. 15, emphasis added)

Still, illiteracy is perceived as the cause of poverty.[31] In a special report published by the National Center for Family Literacy (1990), the statement is made that:

> [U]ndereducated parents usually do not pass on positive educational values to their children. Neither, in many cases, do they provide an adequate economic, emotional, or social environment. (p. 2)[32]

This again is a deficit model. In all the literature that I have read on the family literacy movement, the message comes through loud and clear that if a person can read and write, then poverty will no longer be a problem.[33] This is not the case. All of the

people with whom I am working can read and write, and some of them are highly literate, but poverty is still *the* problem. They use print to express themselves, to organize their everyday lives, and to solve everyday[34] problems as they arise, but poverty is still *the* problem.

Once again, the points made previously apply. We overestimate the importance of generalized, decontextualized skills, and we underestimate the importance of practical thinking and problem solving. The hierarchies of school-based skills that currently make up the General Equivalency Diploma do not translate into work-related skills. Writing specifically about literacy in the workplace, Evelyn Jacob (1986) argues that school-like contexts in training programs should be minimized and that literacy should be embedded in the functional contexts in which it is used.[35]

In ways similar to those described by Sylvia Scribner, the men and women in the Newark and Laconia literacy projects actively participate in highly complex, socially constructed problem-solving situations. They depart from literal formats and use least-effort, flexible strategies; they simplify tasks and participate with others in rethinking problems; they generate hypotheses and develop situated explanations--which they act upon when possible, given the present structure of the system. But these are not "fixed" capabilities. I have found that there are times when literate people (both adults and children) cannot read and write, and there are times when crises are so overwhelming that people's problem-solving capabilities break down. Given the opportunity, each one of the people with whom I am working could restructure their lives in ways that take into account their *own* interpretations of the circumstances in which they have been forced to live. But they cannot do this if they are fighting (sometimes literally) to survive.

At the beginning of this essay, I wrote that we ourselves create the differences in aptitude between people who are artificially poor (white people, people of color, and people for whom English is a second language) and people who live artificially privileged lives. But for the first time in the history of the United States, we cannot continue to discriminate and survive. We can no longer reproduce the conditions of poverty in which people are forced to live. We have to recognize the complex social, economic, and political realities of their everyday lives. We can no longer underestimate the practical thinking and problem-solving capabilities of so many American people. For the first time, as Jacques Attali writes, pluralism has found "its economic echo" (1991, p. 9). The well-being of American families must become a

national priority--not for humanitarian reasons, as so many of us would hope, but for economic reasons.

**Postscript**

Last summer, a William Safire article on language appeared in the *International Herald Tribune* (Safire, 1992). Safire writes about the use of "stripped-down participles as if they were attributive nouns." He writes:

> This brings us to the controversial rap singer Ice-T. Politicians complaining about violence in his lyrics miss the significant cultural controversy in his name--namely, should he be "Iced-T"?

Unfortunately, Safire's attempt at humor falls flat. Ice-T's rap is an expression of rage that is echoed across the United States. We cannot afford to fiddle with his name. Perhaps there was a time when people could live comfortable lives and ignore the suffering of the poor, but the price of ignorance has now grown too great.

How can we help people like Jerry who work in toxic environments for minimum wage, or like Iesha who watch as their children are jailed, or like Laurie who are crippled by the lack of adequate medical care, or like Sammy who are hurting so badly they have lost hope and cry because they know they are going to die? We could begin by recognizing that the war against *poverty* has actually been a war against the *poor*. We could begin with war reparations for the damage we have caused.

At the end of the World War II, the United States helped to rebuild the Japanese economy. In 1949, General MacArthur sent the renowned economist Carl Shoup, professor emeritus at Columbia University, to Japan to restructure the tax system. Reflecting on that time, Dr. Shoup tells about trying to understand the taxation system from the point of view of those who were taxed. He explains:

> [A]s soon as we got ourselves established in Tokyo we split up . . . and went out through the country. At random we'd stop in a shop to inter-

> view a proprietor about his taxes and say, "We are trying to improve the tax system--what has been your experience? What would you suggest?" Or driving along a highway in an army convoy . . . I would say, "Stop. I want to talk to that farmer out there who's working in his fields." So we would take our interpreters--none of us spoke Japanese--and we'd walk out in the field and interview this surprised farmer. And we went down a coal mine, like Eleanor Roosevelt, and walking through the coal mine I would say, "Wait a minute. I want to talk to that man over there hammering away." And we'd find out from him what income tax he paid. (Shoup, 1992)

The taxation system developed by Dr. Shoup and his colleagues was adopted by the Japanese, and at ninety years of age, Dr. Shoup is still revered in Japan.

Economic restructuring in Japan began with conversations with ordinary people. Today in the United States, restructuring must begin with an appreciation of what it is like to live in poverty. Policymakers need to talk to people. When Sam was asked how he would change the forms at the welfare office, he said, "I'd ask, 'What's going on? What seems to be your problem?' I wouldn't ask anything else. Just how they have been surviving. . . . I'd just get the basics out and, you know, find out what they want for help and go from there." As soon as such questions are asked, the complexity of problems is made visible. Notions of "indolence" disappear. Over time an appreciation of everyday problem solving is developed. Insights are gained on how such situated learning can provide a practical foundation for the kind of thinking that is essential in the high-tech industries that will provide many of the jobs of the twenty-first century. Ideas are conceived about the changes that can be made in the workplace, in schools, and in services for families that will enable people to actively participate in ways that make sense to them in what we would like to believe can be a fully democratic society.

As I wrote this article, my son, Ben, came home from college for the weekends, bringing with him a friend who is studying to be an economist at Boston University. Brandon was taking economics each morning and a double session in Latin each afternoon. I told Brandon, who is African American, about this article, and we talked about his life and about his friends who had not "made it." At the end of the conversation Brandon said, "In the future, I'm planning to be very successful. I just know I

will." Brandon put his hand on his heart. "I just know I will. It's something you sort of feel inside, I guess."

Brandon's life is an answer to Lee Kuan Yew. The limits to potential are of a nation's making. In America the possibility exists for new ways of thinking to emerge and for the wisdom of humanity to overcome the indignities and humiliations of the past. We can no longer afford to waste lives. The United States *needs* the dynamic problem-solving capabilities of *all* its people. All of our lives depend upon it.

**Notes**

1. In Japan, pariah status is ascribed to the Ainu, Japan's indigenous people. In Germany, pariah status is ascribed to migrant workers and to refugees.

2. D. Stanley Eitzen (1992) writes that "real weekly wages fell 14% between 1973 and 1986"; during that same time period "the already low wages for black men in poor areas dropped 50%" (p. 586).

3. In his July 12, 1992, appearance on NBC's *Meet The Press*, Jesse Jackson said that more African American males were in jail than in college, and that four times the number of African American males were incarcerated in American jails than in the jails of South Africa.

4. During the first year of the Laconia Literacy Project, George, a member of the community, and my daughter, Lou, worked as community researchers. After that time, they both left to pursue their own college educations. I am grateful for their enthusiastic support during the early days of the project and for their hard work in the community as advocates for participants of the project.

5. Sam had been eligible for disability benefits for a number of years, and he eventually was able to use these benefits to rent an apartment. He continues to struggle, but good things have happened. In the last year he has been able to rebuild relationships with members of his family, and he has been able to spend time with his sixteen-year-old son, whom he had not seen in years.

6. Nineteenth-century Britain had a similar policy: men and women were deported for stealing a loaf of bread.

7. At no time during the meeting did the caseworker ask Laurie about the health or welfare of her family. At no time was she asked what kind of assistance she thought she needed to change the circumstances of her everyday life. And, when the caseworker was asked why Laurie's youngest child Ricky, who is four years old, does not qualify for AFDC or Medicaid, the caseworker said he did not know but he would "look into it."

8. The state department official with whom I spoke did not want to be identified, so I have not named the state.

9. These figures, provided on July 7, 1992, by Statistical Services at the New Hampshire Department of Education, give per-pupil instructional costs with transportation and out-of-district tuition removed.

10. These figures were provided by the California State Department of Education. The official with whom I spoke stated that "large capacity" communities receive limited (if any) financial assistance from the state. "Low wealth" communities receive financial assistance, and in some communities the state pays "the whole cost." This means that most California schools receive $3,500-plus, which places them at the lower end of the scale nationally. The official with whom I spoke said that while the state can provide relief to "low wealth" communities, the disparities still exist. "Large capacity communities" can and do maintain the gap through local property taxes.

11. These figures, provided by the Texas Department of Education on July 7, 1992, represent "overall expenditures."

12. Civil rights lawyers William Taylor and Dianne Piche (1990), in a report to the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Education and Labor, write of "the widespread disparities in expenditures among public school districts within states" (p. ix). They state:

> It is not unusual for economically disadvantaged students in these districts to enter school without preschool experience, to be retained in the early grades without any special help in reading, to attend classes with 30 or more students, to lack counseling and needed social services, to be taught by teachers who are inexperienced and uncertified, and to be exposed to a curriculum in which important courses are not taught and materials are inadequate and outdated. (p. x)

13. Anne Wheelock, a research associate with the Massachusetts Advocacy Center, in a personal conversation with me said that it is important to also consider how money is used. We talked of Boston schools that spend an average of $5,102 per pupil on education. But Wheelock said that fourth-grade students are tracked, with some going into advanced work classes based on test scores. She said these classes are capped at twenty students while "regular" classes are capped at twenty-eight. "If there are scarce resources," she said, "it's the kids in the advanced work classes that get them." (See Dentzer & Wheelock, 1990; and Wheelock, 1992.)

14. One New Hampshire State Department of Education official with whom I spoke stated, "A real predictor of test scores is the income level of the community." Ronald Ferguson (1991), writing about why money matters in public education, reports

that differences in funding "account for between one-quarter and one-third of the variation among Texas school districts in students' scores on statewide standardized reading exams" (pp. 1-2).

15. In one school district in which I am working, the administration decided to administer the Gates McGinitie Reading Test in the fall and in the spring to all students in grades one through six. Teachers were not consulted and did not take part in the decision-making process.

16. At a workshop on creating educational environments in which students have the opportunity to actively engage in problem solving both the forms and functions of written language, a teacher said to me that although she would like to create such environments for her students, she was unable to do so. She said that her merit pay was tied to her students' test scores, so she had to drill them (endless dittos) on the decontextualized skills that the tests contained.

17. The Colorado State Department of Education reported that in 1990, the Cherry Creek School District in Englewood, Colorado, spent $7,458 per pupil on education.

18. Richard Figueroa (1989), writing about the psychometric testing of linguistic-minority students, argues that there are "robust and persistent anomalies in the test scores of bilingual students" (p. 145). Figueroa (1991) also writes, "Virtually the entire corpus of available scientific studies on bias with bilingual children since the 1920s has been flawed because both the cognitive nature and psychometric impact of bilingualism have been ignored" (p. 74). What can happen to a bilingual child because of these anomalies is made visible when Ruiz (1989) tells the story of eleven-year-old Rosemary, who was misdiagnosed as communicatively handicapped. Ruiz, writing about bilingual children in special education, states, "The wrongs done to them are exceptionally severe: misidentification, misplacement, misuse of tests, and poor academic performance within special education" (p. 139).

19. The October 16, 1979, opinion (Case No. C-71-2270 RFP) of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California clearly sets out the racially discriminatory practices which have resulted in the overrepresentation of African American students in special education classes in California.

20. To counter the seeming incompetence of U.S. workers, many industries develop turn-key operations and step-by-step manuals that further disable workers by

removing the opportunity for workers to develop in-depth understandings of the technological processes for which they are made responsible (Taylor, 1989).

21. Thurow (1992) describes the German national apprenticeship system as follows:

> In Germany there is an extensive training system for the non-college bound. The non-college bound enter a dual school-industry apprenticeship system at age fifteen to sixteen. At the end of three years, after passing written and practical examinations, they become journeymen with known skill levels. After another three years of work and additional courses in business management, law, and technology a journeyman can become a master. (p. 55)

22. D. Stanley Eitzen (1992) writes: "The 'new poor' are much more trapped in poverty because of the profound transformation of the U.S. economy" (p. 587).

23. Attali states that "the new racism has many faces." He includes as an example the opposition of people of different religions, as well as between peoples of different colors.

24. New, federal-assisted summer youth programs in South Central Los Angeles require that young people who want to participate sign a declaration that they did not take part in the "riots," thus maintaining their exclusion.

25. Ex-drug dealers in Laconia with whom I have talked stated that they would rather deal drugs than deal with welfare.

26. I am grateful to Ben Taylor for his assistance in writing about rap, and for the use of his paper, "Rap Music."

27. The music division of Time Warner reportedly makes $3 billion a year (see Hall, 1992).

28. Evelyn Jacob (1986) writes: "Illiteracy is a term used by managers for global characterizations of workers. Sometimes these global characterizations are related to reading and writing, but other times they refer to mental ability or general ability to do a task" (p. 198).

29. In *Head to Head,* Lester Thurow writes:

> In most big city school systems, less than half the employees are now classroom teachers. Over time, administrative jobs have grown to provide higher wage opportunities for low-wage classroom teachers. With higher wages in the classroom, most of those unneeded administrative jobs should be abolished, and teachers should return to teaching. Much of the increase in teacher's salaries would effectively be funded out of cuts in administrative costs. (p. 277)

30. A flier distributed by a national educational organization states one of the group's goals as follows:

Reprogram parents and children to make a positive contribution to their own lives and to society as a whole.

31. The value of the support for families in family literacy programs should not be underestimated. The families with whom I work are without support from any social agency. Knowing that someone in a social agency cared about them would make a difference in their lives. But as Elsa Auerbach makes clear, that support comes at a price.

32. Such rhetoric is in step with old Anglo-Saxon, every-man-for-himself capitalism.

33. A similar message was presented by William Bennett when he was drug czar: poverty is caused by drug addiction.

34. In *Cognition in Practice,* Jean Lave (1988) defines "everyday":

> "Everyday" is not a time of day, a social role, nor a set of activities, particular social occasions, or settings for activity. Instead, the everyday world is just that: what people do in daily, weekly, monthly, ordinary cycles of activity. . . . It is the routine character of activity, rich expectations generated over time about its shape, and settings designed for those activities and organized by them, that form the class of events which constitutes an object of analysis in theories of practice. (p. 15)

35. Another form of decontextualization that families experience is the fragmentation of programs.

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